



# CAREER MATTERS

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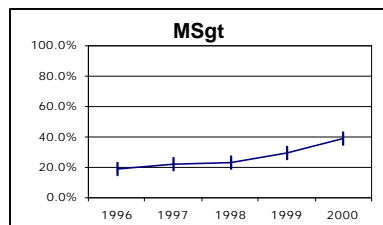
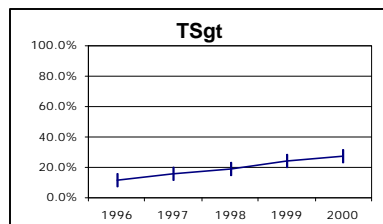
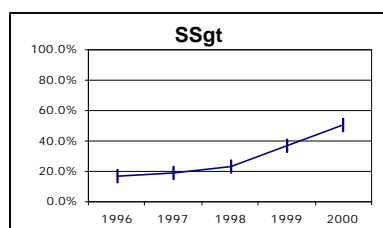
U.S. AIR FORCE

## PROMOTIONS

*SMSGT JODY RODARME*

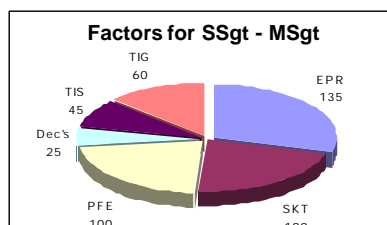
Everybody looks forward to promotions. Promotions recognize hard work, solid study habits, and abilities to take on higher levels of responsibilities.

Promotion opportunities have been steadily increasing. Compiled below are histograms of promotion rates per grade since 1995:

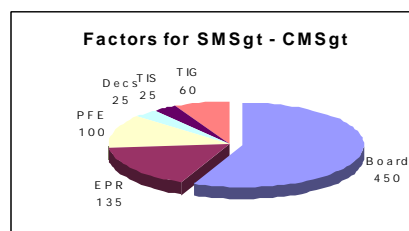


Increases are clearly seen. Surprisingly, time in service (TIS) for selection has remained fairly stable. The historical TIS average for SSgt has been at 7 years and the current average time in service is at 6.34 years. For TSgt, the historical average of 14 years TIS matched the CY00 selection rate. For MSgt, SMSgt, and CMSgt, TIS averages have been longer than historical averages. All are about 1/2 year longer on average.

Weighed factors for SSgt to MSgt are:



Factors for SMSgt and CMSgt change some due to the promotion board. Here's a break-out:



Cut-off scores are no mystery but seem to be a continual misconception. All enlisted promotions are based on end strengths. HQ AFPC determines vacancies per each grade based on known factors such as retirements, separations, and vacancies created by those promoted to the next higher grade. Vacancies are predicted as aggregate for the Air Force, not by AFSC. The promotion rate is determined by the number of vacancies to be filled divided by the number of personnel eligible to test. Once the percentage rate is determined, each AFSC is allocated the same percentage. If the promotion rate percentage is 20 percent and there are 100 eligible in a specific AFSC, the top 20 scores are promoted. The score in spot 20 is determined to be the cut-off for that specific AFSC. If there are 2 members tied at the 20th spot, both members get promoted. After the selection process is completed and members are notified, the cut-off scores are a matter of record. If members selected separate from the service or if a scoring error is found (an unawarded decoration was used in the computation process), the stripe is not awarded to the 21st person because he/she's cutoff score does not meet the established cut-off.

Cut-offs year-to-year vary and have no historical value. If you hear "shop talk" about cut-off scores of years past, remember cut-off scores are re-established each year and have no historical value. You are better off concentrating on how you can raise your testing scores.

One area of note is the exception for chronic critical skills. Certain AFSCs with sustained critical manning receive a 20 percent promotion boost. Using the example above, 24 members would be promoted instead of 20 ( $1/5 \times 20 = 4$ ).

Two other avenues for enlisted promotions are Commander's programs. Below-the-zone promotions to Senior Airman and Stripes for Excellent Performers (STEP) are avenues for Commanders to use to recognize stellar troops. Your unit first sergeant can give you details on how your squadron selects and nominates members for BTZ and STEP.

Comparing officer and enlisted promotion systems, major differences appear. The table below shows how these two systems align:

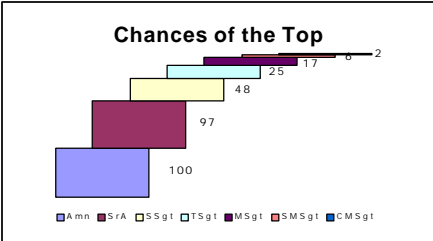
**TABLE 1. Promotions: Officers vs. Enlisted**

Officer	Enlisted
Compete against all	Compete by AFSC
Primary zone	Continued eligibility
Significant consequence if not selected	Less consequence if not selected
Constant promotion rate	Promotion rate varies
Board timing varies	Predictable cycles
Small numbers	Large numbers
Promotion board only	WAPS + board for SNCO
OPR and PRF	EPR only

A word about promotion boards. Each board evaluates the entire record which includes performance, leadership, breadth of experience, job responsibility, professional compe-

tence, specific achievements, and education factors.

For the officer, an advanced degree is highly desirable for progression. For the enlisted member, completing their respective Community College of the Air Force degree is paramount. Higher education that relates specifically to the member's AFSC is desirable by not a mandatory consideration.



So what's your chances of making CMSgt? On average, for every 100 joining 2 will make Chief. Is there a secret for promotion? No. It is an open system to those who work hard, study, complete their professional military education requirements, pursue off duty education, be involved with your community, and rotate through the different areas of their career field. It can be done - you can do it.

**TESTING CYCLES ANNOUNCED BY HQ AFPC**  
*AF Personnel Center*

1. Testing windows for CY01 have been established and are as follows:

CYCLE	TESTING DATES
01E6 (TSgt)	1 Feb - 15 Mar 01
01E7 (MSgt)	1 Feb - 15 Mar 01
01E5 (SSgt)	1 Apr - 30 Apr 01
02E8 (SMSgt)	1 Nov - 10 Nov 01
02E9 (CMSgt)	4 Sep - 7 Sep 01

2. Rescheduling must be kept to an absolute minimum to ensure everyone can be tested within the testing window. Individuals who will depart TDY during the testing window must test prior to their departure. Commanders support staffs and base testing offices must work closely together to ensure compliance with Air Force Instruction 36-2605, Air Force Military Personnel Testing System, para A9.10. If an individual is going to be gone from his/her base during the entire testing window due to TDY or PCS, they will be tested up to 10 days prior to the publicized testing window if the test booklet

is available. Individuals who cannot be tested prior to departure, or those who are given less than 10 days departure notification, will be tested as soon as possible after their return to their home station unless they qualify for additional preparation time in accordance with AFI 36-2605, para A9.10.3. Members who decline testing when given the opportunity to test become ineligible for promotion for the remainder of the cycle. Members who have questions about these procedures should contact their Military Personnel Flight Career Enhancement Office.

3. With the upcoming WAPS testing cycles, now is a good time to review test compromise issues. Air Force personnel tests are designed to measure an individual's knowledge and ability in a given area. In the case of promotion tests, the individual's efforts and initiative are significant factors that are measured by the tests. Compromises lessen the effectiveness of tests as measurement tools and must be prevented. The following infractions, though not all-inclusive, are the most frequently observed:

A. Study guides. The development and use of local study/training guides which focus on preparation for selection or promotion tests, or that use testable materials such as AFPAM 36-2241 Volume 1, Promotion Fitness Examination Study Guide, and Volume 2, USAF Supervisory Examination Study Guide, as reference material, are prohibited. Individual use of commercial study guides, though not recommended or supported by the Air Force, does not constitute a violation of AFI 36-2605. Air Force funds are not to be used to purchase commercial study guides.

B. Group study. Group study by examinees or potential examinees is prohibited. Group study includes discussing, or sharing in any form, information about actual test material or marked/highlighted testable material with other examinees, potential examinees, or any other unauthorized individuals for the purpose of preparing for a promotion test.

C. Training. Training, either official or unofficial, formal or informal, that concentrates on "teaching the test" or emphasizes information known or believed to be on a specific Air Force personnel test is prohibited. Training may not focus on preparing for selection/promotion tests or use testable materials such as AFPAM 36-2241 as reference material. Training programs used to prepare trainees for end-of-course tests are authorized. Like-

wise, training which teaches general test-taking skills is permissible.

D. Question lists. The development and use of lists of questions/answers, except for those prepared and used exclusively by the individual, are prohibited.

4. The Air Force Personnel Testing System requires an integrated approach and support from all levels to ensure we operate it efficiently and effectively. Thank you for the contributions you make to the effort.

**WAPS CDC INDIVIDUAL ISSUE**  
*AF Personnel Center*

1. Please notify promotion eligibles for CY01 test cycles that their WAPS packages should arrive by 1 December. Most of the material has already been shipped; however, we encountered an unexpected delay affecting several thousand records. We are currently resolving these issues and expect to mail the remaining material as soon as possible to arrive NLT 1 December.

2. If WAPS eligibles have not received their materials by 1 Dec, unit WAPS monitors should initiate the required follow-up actions identified in the 1 Aug 00 WAPS catalog. Unit WAPS monitors can query PC-III using the "WAPS CDC INQUIRY" screen in the Career Enhancement/Promotions and Testing function application to determine the material processing date. Please do not contact the Air Force Institute for Advanced Distributed Learning (AFIADL) (FORMERLY ECI) OR HQ AFPC before 1 Dec.

3. We fully expect the additional material to be in the field in time to meet the AFI 36-2605, Air Force Military Personnel Testing System, requirements for all individuals to have materials in hand 30 days prior to testing. Testing begins for 01E6/01E7 cycles on 1 Feb and for 01E5 cycle on 1 Apr.

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